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GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION



National Archives and Records Service

Washington, D.C. 20408

March 21, 1967

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Mr. Robert L. Bannerman
Deputy Director for Support
Central Intelligence Agency
2430 E Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Mr. Bannerman:

Enclosed is the "next to final draft" of the new U.S. Government Correspondence Manual. It was developed with the assistance and guidance of records management officials and others representing numerous Government departments and agencies. We are sending it to you to get your reaction on how well it fits your needs, so that we can move on to publication.

As you will see, a new approach is being used in this manual, at least as contrasted to the 1960 edition. The attempt is made to give the typical Government typist what she needs and nothing she does not. Omitted is any correspondence management philosophy and those items beyond the typists control. NARS will cover these points in a correspondence management handbook at a later date.

In our opinion, the most significant change found in this version is the suggested single format for all our communications--the U.S. Government Business Letter. This simple means of corresponding should benefit each department and agency adopting it, for it will provide a more efficient way for routing letters, eliminate certain items from stock, cut the training time of new typists, and save time in actually typing a letter.

Also enclosed is a statement enumerating other benefits which will come with the adoption of this new approach.

We need your reaction and comments by May 5, if that is possible. During this period when everyone is looking for ways to cut costs, this modern approach to handling correspondence ought to benefit the entire Federal community.

Sincerely yours,

Robert H. Bahmer
Archivist of the United States

Enclosures

Basic Changes in the New Edition

1. Give the typist what she needs and nothing she does not need. Cut out all the philosophy and items beyond the typist's control. We will cover these points in a correspondence management handbook at a later date.
2. Material presented as simply and concisely as possible. Will consist of 2 parts: Preparation of Correspondence and Style Practices. Will run about 1/3 the pages of the current handbook. Cost will drop from \$.70 to \$.40. Part I will have 5 chapters: Letters, Informal Communications, Envelopes and Mailing, Telegrams, and Models of Address. Part II will have 7 chapters: Abbreviations, Spelling, Compound Words, Capitalization, Numerals, Word Division, Punctuation, and a Bibliography.
3. Dropped Part III, Special Documents, of current manual. Federal Register Documents are covered in the Federal Register Handbook on Document Drafting (1966), and in the special course offered in the National Archives. The section on legislative materials is too specialized for inclusion. We plan to issue a regulation in this area in the near future. Reports, Notices, Agenda, and Minutes of Meetings too specialized and far too brief to be helpful. Why clutter the handbook with material that no more than 5% of typists need? For these special documents the typist would probably go to other sources anyway.
4. Easy to read. Illustrations are simply designed and easy to follow. Written in a breezy style — we hope quite readable. We have tried to make it sound as if it is an agency's own manual.
5. Omitted those items that would automatically be supplemented by most agencies; for example, Congressional correspondence, security classification, time limits, special documents, mail handling, etc.
6. One format for all communications — the U.S. Government Business letter. Dropped the memo stationery, Optional Form 10, and the 2-way memo.
7. Adopted the NOMA simplified style: block form, captions, and omitting the salutation and closing.
8. Figure 2, chapter 3, gives the rates for official Government mail under the piece rate postage reimbursement system. If an agency doesn't use this system, Figure 2, coming at the end of the chapter, can be removed.
9. Chapter 4 outlines the procedures a typist should follow when preparing telegrams. With the exception of Figure 2, these procedures are general,

and can be followed regardless of the telecommunications system used by the agency. The theory is that there are certain standards a typist should follow when preparing a telegram, regardless of what is going to happen to the telegram once it reaches the communications unit. Figure 2 shows the proper way to fill out the SF 14, Telegraphic Message, which is used by many agencies. The chapter is designed so that an agency which uses another form may remove Figure 2 from the manual and insert its own example.

10. Guidelines on the use of telegrams have been included for the typist's information. Such information equips her to advise the boss concerning the quickest and most economical way to transmit his correspondence.

11. The SF 14 has been revised. All information, except the page number and number of pages, and the required security marking, have been moved to the top of the page, making it easier for the typist to prepare. The old blank entitled "Name and title of originator" has been renamed "for information call." This should eliminate the current confusion as to whose name belongs in this blank. The blank for "certifying official" has been eliminated. Only one signature is needed on the form, and this should be the signing official's. If he has authority to sign the message, he should have authority to "certify" its release. He will sign his name in the message section, in approximately the same location as on a letter. Eliminating the requirement for two signatures will result in less internal paper-shuffling, and thus faster dispatch of the message.

Advantages of the Concepts Found in the New Edition

1. Easy training. Requires 1/4 of the time presently needed to teach correspondence format. Simple and easy format to learn. Secretaries appreciate its simplicity. Improves typist's morale — more production.
2. Having learned the Government style, a typist can go from one agency to another without retraining. Again a saving of time.
3. Stocking of correspondence supplies simplified in that one item, the letterhead stationery, perhaps another letterhead without captions, is all that is required.
4. Save actual typing time in that fewer indentations needed, fixed left margin, and simplified in design. Fewer typing strokes. A 96 word letter typed in the new format saves 10.7% of time presently required.
5. Captions dictate spacing. Designed for elite type size. "Date" line 2 typing lines above "Reply to Attn. of" caption, which is 2 lines above "Subject" caption. "To" caption 3 lines below "Subject" caption. Two lines below the address typist begins typing body of letter.
6. "Date" caption also in line for block style. Insures date will be given. It will be typed or stamped by typist or in the office of signature or dispatch.
7. "Reply to Attn. of" caption pinpoints the action office to whom a response should be directed. Expedites correspondence to action office, promotes the use of office symbols, helps mailroom get mail to action office, and solves the problem arising from the elimination of various bureau designations on Agency letterhead.
8. "To" caption promotes use of window envelope. Avoids retyping the address on the envelope and matching envelope to letter.
9. "Subject" caption encourages writers to stick to one subject by forcing them to think of the subject of their letter. Helps the writer organize his thoughts. Encourages more 1 page letters. Offers a filing clue. Helps eliminate the awkward opening in letters by pinpointing the subject to be discussed. Prepares the reader for the ideas he is going to encounter.
10. A secretary doesn't have to be concerned about what letterhead or stationery to use — there is only one. Eliminates retyping because of incorrect choice.

11. Encourages the 4S formula. There shouldn't be two styles of writing — "the formal letter" and "the informal memo." The 4S principles (one of which is to relax, use idiom, occasional contractions, etc.) apply to all writing.

12. Encourages the informal reply rather than the 2-way memo. The two-way memo, Optional Form 27, hasn't been used extensively in any agency although NARS has pushed it for 6 years. Agriculture has their own "speed memo." Used 775,000 last year. So it seems that where the technique is being used the agency has adapted its own version.

There are numerous instances where the informal reply can be used. If a copy of the reply is necessary — answer letter with letter or make a fast copy of answer. With the 2-way memo a carbon is retained by receiving office when often it isn't needed. And with the return of the copy of answer to office of origin another copy goes into file — now the original is in the file plus the carbon which was made originally.

13. Better quality of paper for all correspondence. Optional Form 10 doesn't hold up under erasures. If letterhead had been used within GSA for the entire 1966 fiscal year rather than Optional Form 10 or memo stationery — we would have spent only an additional \$350.

14. Esthetically pleasing letter — balanced — organized in a logical sequence — every part placed in sequence because of a definite reason. Why was the signature block to the right of center? Why was the date and reference usually on the right? Why was the salutation and closing included? Address shifts to far left, why?

We have a section in the manual covering the situation where it is desirable for the agency to stock stationery without the printed captions. These situations are those where tradition or protocol demands a more traditional format. A salutation and a closing would be included in this "personalized letter." The manual is designed so that the section on the personalized letter can be removed from the chapter on the Government letter.

We would like to see a push for the single format U. S. Government business letter. At least 80% of our correspondence could be in this format.

15. The U. S. Government business letter format also serves very well for letters going outside the Government. The Air Force has used the simplified format for 6 years — including letters to the general public. The quantity of correspondence going outside the agency should not be the sole criteria for not adopting the simplified format.

16. Cost reduction — now is the time for a no frills, simple means for corresponding. The four main benefits of this new system would be in the areas of:

1. Routing
2. Stocking
3. Training
4. Typing